

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## JACK DOYLE'S DAUGHTER.

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PART III. MISS DOYLE.

CHAPTER X. THE LOST LEADER.

IT was a great night for the Associated Robespierres. The Queen's Head, hitherto unknown save to a few people who lived a little to the north of Holborn, was henceforth to become famous in history. That little upper room, with a long kitchen-table, a dozen hard chairs with open backs, and a row of hat-pegs for all its furniture, and with a framed advertisement of bottled ale for all its artistic attraction, was to be the scene of an act that would throw Runnymede itself into the shade. The Grand President was in his place at the head of the table, smoking a long churchwarden, and with a tumbler of hot rum and water at his elbow. History delights to record the favourite beverages of her great men. To the left sat three, to the right sat three, of the society which had sat upon the future welfare of England any number of Saturday nights for any number of years, and whose mature and patient wisdom was to-night to pronounce itself ready for action. Seven may be thought but a small minority when compared with the forty and odd millions of Britons who were not, as yet, Associated Robespierres. But quality is not to be measured by quantity, nor force by number—every triumphant majority has been a minority once upon a time.

They were, for the most part, grave, solid, silent men, with the air of profound and unimpassioned wisdom that should belong to the fathers of their country. There was nothing about any of them that suggested the hot-headed and fiery enthusiasm of the

working tailor, or the grimmer or more deeply-burning indignation of his neighbour the shoemaker. These were quiet, placid, philosophic-looking men, one and all, save perhaps their president, and he was not very much otherwise. It evidently took them long to think, and long to speak. No doubt their action would be correspondingly swift, sudden, and sure. Even on this important night they showed no want of deliberation, no impatience to shake the fruit which had taken years to ripen. They sat, and smoked, and sipped in silent but pregnant harmony. Yet they were not wholly without suitable signs of action, even now. From time to time, an attendant without a coat, and with shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbow, brought in another steaming tumbler of rum, took the money for it, and vanished.

At length the Grand President struck his fist upon the table, and made the glasses tinkle. "Silence, gentlemen!" said he. "Order. We are going to begin."

One would have thought "Silence!" as fittingly addressed to an oyster-bed, and "Order!" to a congregation of Quakers.

"And strangers," said the Grand President again, "will withdraw." Whereupon the waiter—not that he was by any means a stranger—withdrew.

"Mr. Grand President and gents all," said a fat Robespierre with a husky voice at the immediate right of the chair, "I dare say you'll excuse my rising, because we'll leave that to the country, if needful, and I'm one of them that can speak better off my legs than on; I'm not a born orator, like our Grand, that doesn't signify whether he's on his head or his heels—it's all one to him. Now as the Committee appointed to frame a new constitution for this enlightened but benighted land, I've been

sitting, I may say, while I've got a leg to sit on, and I've worked it all out in a way that'll be safe to commend itself to the very meanest capacity. I'm not one to go beating about the bush, which isn't written in rose-water, and which good wine needs none. I've gone, I may say, straight as the die to the pole, and sat between two stools without upsetting the apple-cart or getting up a tree. And my opinion is, things are as bad as bad, and there's only one way to mend them, and that's to make a sweep clean, and begin at the other end, and go on, always upper and upper and upper, till we get to the very root of the matter and the regular bottom of things. Now in the first place there's the dairy question—a red-hot burning question, that makes a man turn cold in his grave. How's a man to get an honest living when a Government spy is suborned by the helmeted mermaids of the law to come tasting his milk on false pretences, and putting in chalk and things, and lead into his scales, and fat into his butter, when all the time he knows as well as the trade that chalk's the finest thing going for the inside, if people wouldn't be prejudiced, and see themselves as others see them with their own eyes? And so the first thing your Committee recommends—”

“Question—question, Mr. Committee, if you please,” interrupted the shrill voice of the chair. “It is of course intended to abolish every form of meddling in other people's business, whether it's in the shape of gas or taxes. For what else are we here? But butter, and cheese, and eggs will keep—what won't keep is the land. How about the land?”

“Having,” began the speaker, “disposed of the dairy question—not that eggs will keep much over their time, though I must say some people are more particular than they need to be, thinking they ought to get new-laid eggs when they only pay for fresh, as if they thought eggs ran contrary to human nature, and laid themselves over again every day; and so, having done that, I'll come to the land, which hangs on to the dairy question like a pump on to its own handle. I've thought of the land; maybe there's not many that's thought more. I've got a geography book at home, and I got my Joe, who's got a figure-head like a man-o'-war, to work out the whole thing by a sum in long division. Something like a sum it was—went into five-and-twenty figures and seven over; and he's not nine years old. So he found, if the country

was divided among every man, woman, and child in England, there'd be just about an acre apiece for every one of them. Now as that's so, it's clear how Nature meant it so to be. So give it 'em, says I.”

“I second that motion,” said one of the five Robespierres who had not yet put in a word. And then ensued a long deliberative pause.

“Carried unanimously,” said the Grand President, “that every man, woman, and child in England shall have an acre of land—division to take place as soon as it becomes practicable. Now, Mr. Committee—go on.”

“Having disposed of the dairy question, and put the land, I may say, into a nutshell, I now, therefore,” continued the Committee, “beg leave to state that that's about as much as one pair of brains could be looked for to do. Things that have been puzzling human nature for millions and millions of years aren't to be settled as you might say Jack Robinson. I've thought out the dairy, and worked out the land in a sum with twenty-five figures in it and seven more over. ‘An acre apiece, and no meddling with the milkman’—that's your cry. Ah, the thinking I've gone through to get at that, nobody would believe that hasn't tried.”

“Is there anybody else here present,” asked the Grand President, “who has got an idea? But before he lays it on the table, I move that strangers be readmitted. Tom!”

The stranger returned, with a fresh supply of the stimulant which high thinking needs, and then withdrew as before. And then a weak and smothered voice declared itself from behind its own especial cloudlet of steam.

“My idea's this. No levelling down. This is the age of progress, Mr. Nelson, sir—Mr. Grand, I should say; and I for one won't be the fly on that wheel. Another gentleman in my own profession was saying to me on Tuesday, ‘Curtis—whatever are we to do with that bothering House of Lords?’ ‘What would you do with them yourself, Blenkhorn?’ says I. ‘Level 'em down,’ says he. And that's the way some do talk. But what does it come to? Where'd you be the better if you made every marquis in England cut his own hair and shave himself for sixpence instead of going to a regular professor? 'Twould be no good to anybody; the profession would be robbed, and the marquis wouldn't dare to come out in November for fear of being

took for a guy. Level Up! That's my motto! I say, make everybody a lord and a lady—and then everybody will be equal and up at the top together, instead of being a jumble of tops and bottoms, like they are now."

"Carried unanimously," said the Grand President, "that every man, woman, and child in England shall be a duke and duchess. Gentlemen, this is a regular cave of harmony! and yet they take us for democrats and demogorgons—us, gentlemen, of whom every one has this Saturday night made himself and all his fellow-countrymen landowners and lords! For myself, I simply propose to abolish the rates, the taxes, the gas, the water, the milk——"

"The milk, Mr. Grand?" exclaimed the original land reformer, showing a sparkle of animation for the first time. "I must ask you, Mr. Grand, that that expression be withdrawn."

"I will omit the milk, Mr. Committee. That is a subject on which there may be differences of opinion, I am aware. But the taxes, the rates, the gas, the water, the coals, and all duties imposed upon the necessaries of life, such as tobacco, and malt, and alcohol. And I would compel the diffusion of cheap literature, for a duke sitting all alone on his own acre, which might chance to be the top of a mountain, might find time hang a bit, unless he'd something cheap to read. I'd have every book sold for a penny apiece, and if they couldn't print the big ones at the price, I'd have the books boiled down to fit the penny. Carried, gentlemen, I presume? Carried unanimously. What is the next thing to be done? But I think that we have already done pretty well, and that we may indulge in a little melody. Mr. Committee, I call upon you for a song. "I'm Afloat" will be just the thing."

"There's one more little thing, though," said another Robespierre from the farther end of the table. "I thought Mr. Committee would have noticed it; but, as he hasn't been able, and as it won't take more than a minute, and won't disturb this convivial harmony, we'd better have it over. It's the public funds, and the government annuities, and things of that kind. I don't know much about 'em myself, but there's many that do, and I'm given to understand, on the best authority, that how they're all a public swindle, that allows the rich to fatten on the poor. We must have the National Debt abolished the very first

thing, and then, Mr. Grand, and gents, all the rest will come."

"I second that," said his next neighbour. "I have nothing to do with such big debts as that, and it's a shame and a disgrace to feel that one's own native mother country can't pay her debts; and if she won't pay 'em, it's worse still. I know what happened to me once when I couldn't pay one of mine that I didn't justly owe. County-courted I was, and judgment-summonsed, and the Queen's Hotel, Holloway. I had to pay. And sauce for the goose is——"

"Gentlemen," said the Grand President, suddenly rising in his place with nervous haste, "I—I can only say that I am amazed—astounded—thunderstruck—I may even say surprised. Why, the National Debt, gentlemen—the National Debt, and more particularly the government annuities—why, they're the very keystone of our greatness—an oasis in the desert—the palladium of British liberty. Touch the National Debt, gentlemen, and you undo what it has taken generations to rebuild. The Three per Cents, gentlemen, and more especially the government annuities, are sacred things; and I say, sooner let the land remain in the grasp of feudal tyrants; let dukes be counted on the fingers of one hand and the toes of one foot; let milk——"

"Milk, Mr. Grand?" interrupted the committee. "I'll be obliged by your leaving milk alone. There are some things that years of thought——"

"Let milk," cried the Grand President with resolution, "go the way of rates, and taxes, and gas, but let the National Debt flourish like the upas-tree—our bulwark and our pride. Mr. Committee, I call upon you for a song."

But it was as if a real thunderbolt had fallen into the midst of the seven sages. It was more than mortal could understand. They were proud of their leader's eloquence, but prouder still of the advanced spirit which halted and quailed at nothing—their leader in fact as well as in name. Such Conservatism as this seemed downright drunken; but among these seasoned sots drunkenness was unknown. They could only stare and open their mouths; they even forgot the use of the entrance thus made.

"You object to the abolition of the funds, Mr. Grand?" said one at last, or two together.

"I do, gentlemen. Most distinctly I do."

"One would really believe he had something in 'em himself," said he who had proposed to deal in so original a fashion with the House of Peers.

"And if I had something in 'em, sir," said the Grand President quickly, "may I ask what's that to you?"

He who had made the remark was struck silent; but the Committee took up the word.

"Because, Mr. Grand," said he, "a man who is blind to the wrongs of milk, not to speak of eggs, and has an interest in keeping up things as they are, and not making them what they aren't, is no truly Associated Robespierre. And if he happens to be P.G.P.A.R., as you, Mr. Grand, happen Perpetual for the present to be——"

"Mr. Committee," said the admiral, "I am sorry to see in you an inconsiderate person, who only desires to reform society because he was once fined ten shillings and costs for——"

"Inconsiderate? I am not an inconsiderate person, and I'm not a person at all. And if it comes to calling names—you're another, Mr. Grand. Inconsiderate, indeed! What do you mean by that, I should like to know? And what do you want to inform society for, if you please? You're a fund-holder, Mr. Grand, and that's what nobody here can say of me."

"Divide!" was called from the corner of the table whence the motion had come.

Was the National Debt to be abolished or no? It was an exceeding difficult question to decide. For, though there were signs that the milkman represented a somewhat factious opposition, still the eloquence of the Grand President had by no means been thrown away.

"I will not put from this place a question that would annihilate the very axioms of society," declared the admiral. "I will not rob the widow and the orphan to glut the maw of a ravening milkman, who wants an acre of land to keep a cow. I distinctly refuse."

"You—a common scribbling lawyer's clerk——"

"I'm not, sir; I'm a gentleman at large."

"Maybe you won't be at large for long——"

"Divide!"

There was no mistaking the feeling of the house this time. The authority of the chair was gone. Eloquence could not conquer the fact that the trusted leader of the Associated Robespierres had boasted

of being a gentleman at large, and had not denied that he was a fund-holder. Just for a handful of silver he had left them. Never could it be glad confident morning again.

"Divide!"

The National Debt was abolished by a majority of six to one.

The Grand President rose, while an awful silence reigned.

"Gentlemen," said he, beginning in an extraordinarily deep voice that rose higher and higher as he went on, "this is an evil day for England. You will live to regret this day. For me, I can only consider you, considered collectively, as one milkman and five fools. I shake the dust of this chair from my feet, and will devote the remainder of my talents to the Maintenance of Things as they Are."

And so he left his chair to the milkman, and the room, and the Associated Robespierres to pay for his last tumbler of rum.

"There's the ingratitude of human nature," thought the admiral as he walked homeward. "It's all self—self—self—at the bottom of everything going. However, some sort of a crisis was bound to come; only I never hoped it would come so quickly. Political associations like that are all very well while one's young, but they're more than a man can afford who's got anything to lose. I'm well out of it, and before I've paid my subscription, too. But I didn't think they'd be quite so ready to let me go. They might have asked me to stay, if only to give me the pleasure of saying, 'Go and be hanged.' Well, I said it without their asking. I'll soon find a better sort of a club than that, now, to spend a stray evening in. The notion of confiscating the National Debt! Absurd. And government annuities! There's one comfort, they won't do it in my day; and, after me, they may do what they please. What a contemptible thing selfishness is, to be sure! And what a set of selfish, ungrateful, conceited upstarts all milkmen always are."

It was not to the old house in the shabby terrace that the ten thousandth victim of political intrigue and of popular fickleness and ingratitude returned. It was to a larger and newer house in a newer, if not much better suburb, which wore an air of retired tradesmanhood and of respectable competence all round. Nor, as of old, did he fumble at the door with a large



iron key, or, failing that, rap with his umbrella till it should be opened to him by Phœbe or one of the boys.

This time he made use of a regular knocker, and pulled a bell—though the latter, since the wire had become slack, was a mere form—and was admitted by a real maid of all work, as different from Phœbe as any professional from a mere amateur. It was quite clear that the mission of the Robespierres had become obsolete, and that things were no longer so completely as they ought not to be. It is true that the vision of the interior, as seen through the open door, did not suggest luxury, nor even comfort. There were too many signs of unwiped boots, there was too little light, too many broken banisters, and too much smell of dust and onions. In these regards, the general effect had not improved. But it was a great advance to see an unbroken knocker from the outside, and to have it answered by a real girl.

"There's a gent called to see you in the parlour," said she.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the admiral; "who could possibly want to see me? What's his name?"

"He doesn't have no name," said the girl; "least, he didn't give none to me."

"Better luck next time then, eh, Maria?" chuckled the admiral, thus causing Maria to blush and giggle. "'Tisn't the milk—I mean the taxes, eh?"

"He don't look like taxes," said Maria. "He looks more like spoons. I locked up the best ones, and I put him into the parlour, 'cause there's nothin' there he could turn into a threepenny-bit, lest it's the fire-irons, and them we wants new."

"Why didn't you say I was out?"

"So I did, but he only says, 'Never mind, I'll wait,' and walks in, before I could bang the door to; but I've locked up the spoons, what of 'em there were."

"Well, we'll soon see," said the admiral, hanging up his coat and hat, and smoothing down his hair with a broken clothes-brush that lay handy. Then he walked into the parlour, a rather less tidy room than the old one, and could not help giving a little start and cry of not over-delighted surprise. For there, standing on the hearth-rug, he saw Phil.

He was certainly surprised, and as certainly displeased; for this son, with his stern, steady, uncomfortable ways, was a standing and reproachful enigma to the father. But, whatever one may feel within,

one must show a bright new knocker to the world, and a father's heart must not look closed, even though the returned son may not possess the claims of a prodigal.

"Why—why, Phil, my boy!" said he, holding out first his left and then his right hand; "this is an unexpected sort of a thing. Why, I thought you were in Russia, or Prussia, and—won't you sit down?"

"Yes, father," said Phil, hardly caring to affect any particular impulse of filial joy. "I've been ill, with some sort of marsh-fever, and had to come home."

"Ah, marsh-fever, that sounds bad. I've had a touch of the rheumatics myself. But you look pretty right again now, eh? I suppose as we didn't know you were coming, you won't mind pigging it a bit with some of the boys?"

"I've got a bed out."

"Oh, then you're not going to stay? I'm sorry, but of course you know your own business best; you always were the one to know that, I must own. And you're not the least bit of the way up a tree? Doctor's bill all paid?"

"I've got money enough till I get some more, and—"

"You don't want money? And you won't stay? Phil, my dear, dear boy, I'm as glad to see you as if somebody had given me fifty pounds. Do sit down, and make yourself at home."

"And I was going to say, I had an Irish diamond of a doctor, who is such a bear that he won't hear me speak of a fee. He's made a man of me, and now he won't let me behave like a man."

"Bless my soul! The very next time I get the rheumatics I'll go to that doctor, Phil. He must be a first-rate man, that doctor of yours."

Phil had been hoping and dreading for the last half-hour that the parlour-door would open, and that he would be compelled to meet the eyes and hear the voice which he had once made up his mind never to see and hear again. Of one thing he was sure—he neither could, nor would, ask after her; he wanted to know so much that to ask was simply impossible. He had not even asked the strange maid-servant if the young lady was at home.

"No, there are plenty of good fellows knocking about," said Phil. "Why the firm, when I went to them the first thing, and told how matters were, they didn't send me about my business for an impostor who couldn't do a stroke of work without breaking down; they paid

me up my full wages, even for the time I was ill, though they had to pay a stronger man to do the work, and are sending me down to report on a big drainage affair down in the country, so you see I've fallen on my legs, thanks to them. But how is it I never heard you'd moved? It was only by the merest chance I found you out at all. I began to be afraid—— But it's not that, anyhow. I went to the terrace; nobody knew where you'd gone. I went to Mark and Simple's; they said you'd left them for good, and didn't know anything. So I went to Dick's place in the City; he wasn't there, of course, and if I hadn't found a messenger there who was open to a shilling, nobody would have told me, even there; the old clerks took me, I expect, for one of Dick's friends, and the young ones for a dun. What does it all mean?"

"H'm—ha—well, the truth is, Dick, what with the rheumatics and things, I felt I ought to retire from copying-work, and have a little peace and comfort for the rest of my days. I've not had too much in my time."

"And you have the means?"

"Well, you see, what with one thing and another, a bit here and a bit there, I manage to scramble on—things are changed a bit for the better, as you see."

So Phil did see; but entirely failed to understand how. The better house, the servant, his father's retirement from crust-winning, better clothes, and general air of prosperity—all were absolutely inconsistent with the possibilities of human nature. Suddenly an idea struck him that made his heart turn faint and sick. Some letter must have failed to reach him out in Russia. Had Phoebe found a husband, and was it he who found all these other things?

"How is—Phoebe?" he brought out with an effort which made the question sound like "What have you done with her?" to the admiral's startled ears.

"Oh, Lord!" he exclaimed in thought, while he stood looking scared; "what was it I said about Phoebe to the boys? Dead? No; that was to—let me see—gone away?"

"I have so much to learn," said Phil, seeing the strange look on his father's face.

"Is she—is she—well?"

"I—I hope so; I hope so, I'm sure," stammered the admiral, trying to bring the wits together which this terrible son of his always managed somehow to scare away; "I hope she's pretty well."

"Father, in Heaven's name, what do you mean?"

"Ah, I've got it! She's gone off, Phil, my boy; and I've registered a solemn vow never to hear that young woman's name mentioned again. So we'll change the subject. I want to take down the name and address of that medical man who doesn't want fees. I'm pretty well at present, but it's always as well to know."

"With whom?"

Phil's voice was as steady and cold as a rock, and his heart as heavy.

"Ah!" said the admiral; "that's just what I'm blessed if I know."

"And you've made no search; you don't know if—oh, this is too much to bear!"

"Eh? Well, it is bad and ungrateful of her, I must say. But when a girl will go, let her go—it's the only way, say I. If she don't one way, she will another. But you see, it's all mixed up with the Three per Cents. Touch 'em, and down they go. She was a nice girl, too, and I miss her at tea-time, for she wasn't a bit like the boys. But—well, there. Won't you stay and see the boys?"

Phoebe lost! He knew half her faults, and yet it seemed to him as if an angel had fallen, and then he heard that grand tenor voice charming the soul out of her, and he knew at least the name of the devil who had ruined her, and wished he had crushed the creature in his hands instead of letting it go.

"No, thank you, father; I am going to work," said he, and he knew in his heart that work must be the whole end now, on this side the grave.

## THE DRAGON IN TRADITION AND LITERATURE.

THERE are, perhaps, few of us whose earlier years were not made familiar with those traditional tales of fairies and monsters, which for ages have been the alternate horror and delight of childhood. In these wonderful histories the dragon makes a considerable figure, and no romance of enchanted castle, distressed maid, and valiant knight can be complete without his direful influence. In the popular literature and folk-lore of every nation is preserved the recollection of innumerable fights with this traditional enemy of mankind; and his external form is depicted with every adjunct of horror and mystery which imagination has been able to conceive. His body is the writhing

form of a serpent, his jaws are those of a crocodile, his claws those of a lion, and his wings, unlike anything in animated nature, must be sought in the creatures of the geological epochs. Flames issue from his mouth, his eyes glare like balls of fire, and his scales clatter with a noise which strikes terror into the hearts of all but the bravest. But his form is not constant. Sometimes he is many-headed, again he is wingless, now he bears horns on his head, often a sting in his tail. At times he has been known to speak. But, whatever his form or his capabilities, he is always found on the side of evil; and, as fairy tales have always a moral tendency, he is never known to be victorious. Still, the good knight has always a hard struggle with him, and many a tough lance is broken and many a good sword hacked, before the monster is finally overthrown.

For the origin of this fight with the mythic dragon, the typification of the eternal struggle between good and evil, we must go back to the very cradle of the human race. In the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Evil Spirit compasses the destruction of mankind; and in the embodied traditions of the sacred books of the East this struggle is a constantly recurring theme. *Vrithra* or *Ahi*, "the biting-snake, the thief, the seducer," who hides his prey in his dismal cave, and keeps the waters which are necessary for the earth, is slain by the mighty *Indra*, in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. In the Persian myth it is *Ormuzd* who slays *Ahriman*; and in the *Zendavesta*, *Thraëta* who conquers *Azidahaka*, who, according to the *Yagna*, had three heads, three throats, six eyes, and a thousand strengths. In the modern epic of *Firdusi* this is reproduced as the victory of *Feridun* over *Zohak*.

It is remarkable that while the dragon, as the emblem of evil, is everywhere regarded with hatred and disgust, a creature which is analogous to it, and which, though totally distinct from it, is yet described by the same name, should, in some countries, be regarded as an object of reverence and veneration. Mr. Cox has well observed, in his *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, that serpent-worship is founded on the emblem of the *Linga*, and is altogether distinct from the ideas awakened by the struggle of light against darkness, which is always represented as a serpent; but the names *Ahi* and *Vrithra* of the *Vedas* do not imply keenness of sight, which is the real meaning of dragon.

When the creature was first used to symbolise darkness and evil, it was always described as a creeping thing. Later writers endowed it with wings and claws. Yet it is interesting to know that tradition has preserved its original crawling nature, for in the folk-tales of the north of England it is still described as a worm.

Though the dragon is essentially a winged serpent, an interesting question has been raised as to whether its accepted form has been affected by some knowledge the ancients may have possessed of the extinct *pterodactyl*, which it in some degree resembles.

Milton, in the *Paradise Lost*, in that passage in which Satan, returning to Pandemonium to recount his victory over mankind, is greeted with the prolonged hiss of the transformed demons, and is himself changed into a dragon, has given a powerful description of the monster as compared with the serpent from which it has been poetically evolved.

When the dragon myth was carried to the shores of Greece, and embodied in classic literature, it received many new developments and was presented in several different forms. But the central idea was the monster engendered in the darkness and slime of the marshes, the *Python* slain by *Apollo*; and the struggles between *Bellerophon* and *Chimera*, *Hercules* and the *Lærnian Hydra*, *Edipus* and the *Sphinx*, are but versions of the same story. The fable of the dragon whose ravenous appetite could be appeased only by the periodical sacrifice of a beautiful maiden, which is told in the story of *Perseus* and *Andromeda*, has since been many times reproduced; and, in the more general form of a damsel delivered from the keeping of a monster, was a frequent theme in mediæval romance. In the former case it will invariably be found that the hero arrives just in time to deliver the king's daughter from the terrible fate which otherwise awaits her; and, as in the classic story, is generally rewarded with the lady's hand.

As the classic gods and heroes are found in the mythologies of the north under different names and in different circumstances, so the dragon is still preserved as the opponent of all that is good and virtuous. In the older *Edda*, which belongs to the ninth century, but was collected by *Seemund* in the eleventh or twelfth, it is *Sigurd*, the popular Scandinavian hero, who slays the dragon *Fafnir*, by whom the earth has been robbed of its treasure.

He descends to the infernal regions to recover this; and there stabs the monster who addresses to him the following serious words: "Youth and youth, of what youth art thou born? of what men art thou the man? When thou didst tinge red in Fafnir that bright blade of thine, in my heart stood the sword;" at the same time foretelling that the recovered treasure will prove to be his ruin. Sigurd then takes the monster's heart, which he roasts; and, through touching it to see if it is done enough, burns his finger. With the familiar action which has since been immortalised by Charles Lamb, in his Dissertation on Roast Pig, the hero then puts the injured member to his lips, and is immediately enabled to understand the language of birds. He thus learns that he must slay Reginn, the dragon's brother, who otherwise would defraud him of the recovered wealth. This singular story is slightly varied in the Teutonic version, in the Nibelungen Lied, in which Siegfried, after slaying the dragon and obtaining his hoard, bathes in the monster's blood, and is rendered invulnerable. There is an evident connection between these stories of treasure-keeping dragons, and those of the sleepless dragon of the garden of the Hesperides, and that which kept watch over the golden fleece.

It was doubtless from this Teutonic source that the dragon found its way into English literature. In Beowulf, the earliest poem of our Saxon ancestors which has been preserved to us, the hero's father is a dragon-slayer: "To Sigemund sprang—after death's day—glory no little—since battle-hardy—he the worm slew—the hoard's guardian;" and Beowulf himself destroys a monster, the keeper of treasure, as in the tales of Sigurd and Siegfried. Among the English people, with whom the grotesque and romantic found always a ready acceptance, stories of dragons had a wide popularity, and, no doubt, were often told on winter nights in the huts of swineherds and huntsmen, or were the theme of stirring songs in the rude halls of thanes and franklins. Sitting by his log-fire, or looking out from his cottage-door as the shades of night drew on, the Saxon peasant peopled with elves the forests and morasses around him, and gave to the dragon-myth of past ages and distant climes a distinct and local application. Hence it is that the stories of "worms," which may still be heard in many parts of the north of England, obtained their place in popular lore.

With the coming of the Normans, and the rise of the spirit of chivalry, these tales assumed a more romantic form, and in songs of doughty knights and injured maidens were the common theme of mediæval troubadours. The old romance of Sir Eglamour of Artois is in many respects characteristic of the whole. The knight, having heard that at Rome a dragon "ferse and felle" lays waste the country for fifteen miles round the city, exclaims:

"Wyth the grace of God Almyght,  
Wyth the worme zyt schalle y fyght,  
Thowe he be nevyr so wyld;"

and, departing at once on his self-imposed mission, soon finds traces of the monster's ravages, for he sees "slyne men on every honde." The creature was so terrible in appearance that the sight of him alone struck both man and horse to the ground; but the knight, quickly recovering himself, enters upon the combat, and, though sore hurt with "a depe wounde and a felle," succeeds at length in striking off the head of the "grete beste." It need scarcely be added that the people hold great rejoicings, or that the "ryche emperoure of Rome" has a "doghtyr bryght" who heals the champion's wounds. The classic legend of Perseus and Andromeda is reproduced in mediæval guise in the popular story of St. George and the Dragon, which borrows most of its incidents from earlier romances, and particularly from the celebrated one of Sir Bevis of Hampton. The monster is appeased, as in the classic story, by the sacrifice of a maiden every day to its ravenous appetite; but St. George arrives in time to save the king's daughter from her fate. Ariosto, in the Orlando Furioso, has reproduced the same incident in Orlando's rescue of Angelica exposed to the Orc. The stories of Sir Guy and a host of other dragon-slayers bear a strong resemblance to those given above.

The finest description of a dragon in the English language is that of the fiery monster from whose power the Red Cross Knight rescues the parents of the Lady Una, in the first book of the Faerie Queene; and Spenser seems in it to have collected the attributes of all earlier dragons and blended them into one terrible whole. The very roaring of the creature shook the "steadfast ground;" and, when he perceived the knight,

The dreadful beast drew nigh to hand,  
Half flying and half footing in his haste,  
That with his largeness measured much land,  
And made wide shadow under his huge waist;  
As mountain doth the valley overcast.



His body was armed with brazen scales, which clashed with a horrible noise, and were so hard—

That naught mote pierce ; ne might his corse be harm'd.

His flaggy wings, when forth he did display,  
Were like two sails, in which the hollow wind  
Is gather'd full, and worketh speedy way :  
And eke the pennes, that did his pinions bind,  
Were like main-yards with flying canvas lin'd.

His knotty tail, little short of three furlongs in length, was armed at the point with two stings of exceeding sharpness ; but far sharper than his stings were his "cruel rending claws."

But his most hideous head my tongue to tell  
Does tremble ; for his deep devouring jaws  
Wide gap'd, like the grisly mouth of hell,  
Through which into his dark abyss all ravin fell.

And, that more wondrous was, in either jaw  
Three ranks of iron teeth enrang'd were,  
In which yet trickling blood, and goblets raw,  
Of late devour'd bodies did appear ;  
That sight thereof bred cold congeal'd fear :  
Which to increase, and all at once to kill,  
A cloud of smothering smoke, and sulphur sear,  
Out of his stinking gorge forth steem'd still,  
That all the air about with smoke and stench did fill.

In the beginning of the combat the knight gave such thrusts to the monster as he had never before felt, at which "Exceeding rage inflam'd the furious beast;" and taking to his wings he carried both man and horse across the plain, "So far as ewghen bow a shaft may send," when the knight compelled him to bring his flight to an end. The champion then again charged the monster with the strength of three men, and the stroke gliding from his scaly neck made a fatal wound beneath his left wing. On this the dragon, roaring and spitting fire, made a furious attack on the knight ; but, wounded and unable to use his wings, was finally overcome.

Perhaps of all folk-tales relating to dragons, that of the Worm of Lambton, in Durham, is the best example. Sir Cuthbert Sharpe published an account of it in a volume called the *Bishoprick Garland*, which consists of the legends of the county of Durham ; and the story is briefly as follows :

Many generations ago the heir of the knightly house of Lambton was of a profligate mode of life, much given to ungodly exercises, and with a strong predilection for fishing on Sunday. One day he was engaged in this occupation for a long time without success ; and, as his patience shortened, his imprecations became more frequent, to the great scandal of the good folk on their

way to church. At length he felt a pulling at his line, and, after keeping his captive in play for some time, succeeded, not without trouble, in landing, to his great disgust, an exceedingly ugly worm, which he flung with a loud oath into a well close by. Here the strange creature grew apace, and finally, having outgrown its abode, took possession of a rock in the middle of the river Wear. It was after all but a degenerate descendant of the mighty creatures of earlier times, for its ravages seem chiefly to have been made on the farm-stock of the neighbouring peasants. Nevertheless it became a great terror in the district, and was only prevented from making depredations at Lambton Hall by the milk of nine cows placed daily in a trough for its gratification, an offering which no doubt represents the maiden of the classic story and of the legend of St. George. To make a long story short, when the heir of Lambton, who had sown all his wild oats, returned from the wars, he was conscience-stricken at the loss and misery which had fallen upon the land through his early failings, and determined at once to slay the worm. Now the creature had an unfortunate power of reuniting the parts of its body when severed, which it probably inherited from the Lærnian Hydra or other classic monster ; so, acting under the advice of a wise-woman, the knight took his stand on the worm's rock in mid-stream, and when, after a long struggle, he managed to cut its body in two, one half floated down the river, and thus the creature was slain.

The sequel of the tale, which is singular, and perhaps unique, bears a strange resemblance to the biblical story of Jephtha's daughter. The knight had made a vow that, when he had destroyed the monster, he would slay the first living thing he met. It had been arranged that when he blew his horn his favourite hound should be let loose for the sacrifice ; but, when his father heard the joyous sound, forgetful of these instructions, he went himself to meet his son. What was the horror of the returning hero to behold the terrible alternative before him ! He hesitated a moment, then blew another blast, the hound came bounding to him, and was slain. But the vow was broken, and a curse descended upon the family that for nine generations no lord of Lambton should die in his bed, a presage which, according to popular tradition, was fulfilled.

There are several other similar stories in the North of England, such as those of the worms of Socburn, Linton, and Spindlestone Heugh. Mr. Surtees in his *History of Durham* has defended the apparent absurdity of calling the dragon a "worm," which, as we have seen, was common in mediæval romances, and has pointed out that Dante himself has called Cerberus "*il gran vermo inferno*."

Such are some of the instances, which may be drawn from tradition and literature, of the appearance of the mythic dragon.

### THE STORY OF A WALTZ.

IN a career of hard work, and often of drudgery, there arise sometimes little, strange, unexpected turns of fortune, not very marvellous of their kind, but still welcome and encouraging, and often flavoured with a little romance. There have lately been "cropping up," as it is called in those colloquial columns of gossip which are a special feature of the newspapers of the time, allusions to a certain waltz, which came into existence under odd circumstances. As the writer of these lines happens to know more about the matter than anyone else, it may be found entertaining to relate what really took place.

Now a true waltz—such as Waldteufel, the most popular composer of dance-music now, writes—is a poem, and might engage the talent of the first composers. Infinite art and dramatic feeling are required, a melancholy despairing strain, strange to say, best quickening the dancers' motions, and there is the artful contrast of rough and uninteresting passages introduced, like bitters, so as to make return to the more exquisite bits longed for and welcomed when they do arrive. On this account there are but few really good waltzes. Sometimes a popular and good air will carry the whole waltz through, and the taking tune of Mr. Sullivan's Sweethearts has formed one of the most successful of this day. On the other hand, there is a curious uncertainty, even as to first-rate composers. There are dozens of Strauss's and Gung'l's, good as any that they have written, which are unknown and uncared for. Then there is the element of patronage, royal or other, which has often brought an inferior thing into a vast popularity. The Soldaten Lieder, the Beautiful Blue Danube, are perfect poems in their way,

and have been little fortunes to their publishers—probably not to their authors.

Being a diligent and laborious writer, and one who has written scores of books, I was getting ready for Christmas—that is to say, for furnishing those jovial festival stories which were until lately as indispensable as the plum-pudding on the day itself. Now these matters are avoided. There are no outcast brothers to come home exactly on Christmas Eve in the snow, and look in at the squire's window—the Hall—where everybody is merry-making. There is no making-up of old feuds, and the like. All these things have gone out. But still a certain amount of jovial stories is in demand, for annuals and the like. Being at work one October night on this description of provender, a letter came in from one of the great illustrated papers. It was a request to furnish them with a contribution suited to the festival, but to be done at once, as there was not an hour to be lost. Two large but effective engravings accompanied it, one of which portrayed a lady in ball dress, fastening her glove, the other the outside of The Grange, its mullioned windows lit up—picturesque enough as a subject. This is lifting the corner of the curtain a little discreetly or the reverse; but the fact is so, that often the story illustrates the illustrations rather than the illustrations the story. It was a pleasing task. Working at white heat, I had soon produced a tale of some length—a genuine thing, based on that best of all foundations, one's own experiences; in my own case, a sad and recent one. It was despatched—in both senses; that is, completed and sent in in a short period of time.

Now this story was called *Loved and Lost*; or, the *Last Waltz* (*Geliebt und Verloren*); and it turned on what might be suggested by some of the strains of pathetic melancholy we hear at a ball in the small hours. A man had met a young girl some years before at such a ball, and during this waltz had declared his affection. Events, however, had interposed and parted the lovers. Some years pass by. One night he is accidentally at another ball at The Grange—the building with the lit mullions—looking on sadly at the dancing, when this very waltz, played again, brings him back to the old scene.

Here, indeed, was the scene; "Skipper's band" was the orchestra.

"So it went on the rather monotonous round—now quadrille, now lancers, now waltz and headlong galop, wild Balaclava

charges; the more sober dances were gradually becoming extinct, to the annoyance of what might be called the Quakers and Methodists of the ball-room, who, with their discreet measures, were coolly put aside in defiance of all law and agreement. At that time of night, to be "wading" patiently through steps and slow measures was unendurable; and, accordingly, here were the greedy waltzers and gallopers devouring dance after dance; while the aggrieved quadrillers, partners on arm, looked on, rueful and indignant. And now I see Skipper bending down in earnest talk with a sort of deputation, who had waited on him, and now came back with alacrity and rejoicing, ready for fresh exertion.

"Hark! What was it that kindled for me a sudden interest in the proceedings? that made the nerves thrill and the pulse quicken? Where had I heard it? It seemed a strain lent from Paradise! How it rose, and fell, and swelled, and died away; growing tender, pleading, and pathetic; now turning into a fierce clash and whirl, as though impelled by despair and driven by furies; then becoming soothed into piteous entreaty, and winding up in a dying fall. It was, in short, one of those divine waltzes, as they may be called. Where, when, had I heard it? I knew it. There are a few of these that seem part of your life, like a poem. It may have happened that one of those tender, complaining measures has been the accompaniment to some important act. It is then no longer mere vulgar music. Some, such as the newer German waltzes, touch strange mysterious themes, reaching beyond this earth. Then the artful enchanter suddenly dissolves into a sad and pathetic strain, for, merry as the dance is, a merry tune would not be in keeping; alternated with the crash of cymbals, and, desperate protest as it were, appeal for mercy or reckless defiance, to be succeeded even by grotesque and reckless antic, all, however, to revert to the pleading of the original strains, led by the sad and winding horn! Such was the 'last waltz' of this night, which thrilled me, yet seemed to thrill Skipper himself far more, who led, as some one near me said, now "like a demon," and now like a suppliant begging for mercy. What was it? Where had I heard it? It was charged brimful of agitating memories. Some dancer near me said flippantly, 'Oh, that's the Loved and Lost—pretty thing,

isn't it?' And, looking down on the card, I read:

"WALTZ, Geliebt und Verloren (Loved and Lost).  
MÜLLER.

"Again, where had I heard it? For it was music that seemed to belong to other spheres far away, and to time quite distant. There it was again, returning to the original sad song—a complaining horn, full of grief and pathos, which invited such dancers as were standing or sitting down to turn hurriedly, seize their partners, and once more rush into the revolving crowd! It was slow, and yet seemed fast as the many twinkling feet of the dancers. Skipper, mournfully sympathetic, beat time in a dreamy way, as though he were himself travelling back into the past, calling up some tender memories. Then he turned briskly, and called vehemently on his men, dashing into a frantic strophe, with crashing of cymbals and grasshopper tripping of violins; dancers growing frantic with their exertions, and all hurrying round like bacchantes; the strain presently relaxing and flagging a little, as though growing tired—to halt and jerk—then, after a pause, the sad horn winds out the original lament in the old pathetic fashion. For how long would it go on? Skipper knew well its charm, and was ungrudging in his allowance—would probably go over and over it again, so long as there were feet able to twirl. I know I could have listened till past the dawn.

"Airy, cloudy thoughts and recollections came with the music; it floats to him with 'a dying fall,' it rises again as the brass crashes out, and then flits by him the figure of his old love."

That night all is made straight and the past forgotten.

As much depended on the waltz, a sort of vivid description of the music and its alternations was attempted. You heard the soft inviting sad song with which it began, the strange fluttering trippings into which it strayed—aside as it were from its original purpose—the relaxing, the sudden delirious burst which sent everyone whirling round in headlong speed, and the last return to the sad song of the opening!

The story was duly printed, and went forth with a highly-coloured portrait of a child, which hung in every shop window, and which was somehow the cause of bitter animosity among the newsvendors, who never could secure sufficient quantities of the infant in question. I received a very

handsome sum for my services, and was more than content.

Now begins the real story of the waltz. With that curious literalness which characterises our public or publics—for there are many—there were found persons to assume that there must be some waltz existing of the kind, and which had been performed, if not at the ball in question, at least somewhere else.

Orders were accordingly sent to various music-sellers for copies, which, as was natural, could not be supplied. A sagacious vendor thus applied to, wrote to the author in question, asking for a copy which could be published, and suggesting that if it had been only performed in the author's brain hitherto, it could be brought into more tangible and profitable shape.

On this hint I went to work, and having a fair, though unscientific, musical taste, having before now written "little things of my own," yes, and sung them too, I soon put together a string of waltzes. A near relative, also with a taste, had devised a tune which was popular in the family, and this I fashioned into an introduction. It was sent off, a clever professional took it in hand, shaped and trimmed, and rearranged, but to my astonishment declared that the introduction—a sad slow measure—was the very thing for the rapid step of a waltz. This was somewhat of a surprise, and it was believed, that in consequence, the whole would make certain shipwreck.

In due course the waltz made its appearance. The publisher was an enterprising person and knew how to advertise.

Everywhere appeared "Loved and Lost." I think something was quoted from the newspaper in question. It began to be asked for—to sell. The next step was to have it arranged for a stringed orchestra, and next for the military bands. Next it was arranged as a duet, "à quatre mains." Next, in easy fashion for the juveniles. Next, our publisher came mysteriously to ask would I, being a literary man, and, of course, a poet, write words for "a vocal arrangement." I agreed to do so, and supplied the lines. Presently the song was being sung at the Brighton Aquarium. In short, the arrangements in every shape and form now fill a very respectable volume. But what strain was more refreshing than the first grind on the organ, coming round the street corner; or, later, its regular performance by the German bands, and by the grand orchestra at the Covent Garden Concerts! Yet all this

referred back to the story itself—itsself like the whirl of a waltz, dreamy and romantic and sad.

When we came to reckon up the results, some sixty or seventy thousand copies had been disposed of. And some time later, on the copyright changing hands, it was disposed of for a sum of two hundred pounds!

Such is the highly satisfactory story of my waltz.

### CONCERNING A PLEBEIAN.

#### A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

ONE day, lounging round alone, Martin was attracted by a bit of brilliant colour between the trees. He soon recognised Miss Adams, in her scarlet dress, sitting on a low wall that skirted the carriage-way. She was apparently sketching, and her pretty feet and conspicuous stockings dangled a little above the road. He went over to her, and was flattered by her blushes, forgetting that these were habitual.

"What are you drawing?" he asked, putting much pathos into his voice. "The cow-shed? You must give it to me as a souvenir."

"Are you so particularly attached to the cows?" she answered, blackening her pencil in her mouth, preparatory to giving the final touches.

"You are very cruel," he said tenderly; "you know I want something of yours to remember these happy days by."

Miss Adams, with tremulous lips and downcast head, began to put up her book and pencils.

"Don't go in," pleaded Martin; "let us go for a walk down the road."

She gave him her hand, and jumped down from the wall.

"I don't want to go in, Celesta has been so unpleasant to-day. She quarrelled with Jack all the morning, until I took his part, and then she made up with him and turned on me. They are now both of them lying under a tree, wrapped up in a railway-rug."

Down the sloping mountain road, between stately forest-trees arching over their heads, in the midst of a delicious silence, as in an enchanted world, walked Martin and Kate Adams. The only sounds that broke the stillness were the music of distant cattle-bells, and the murmur of myriads of ants rustling over their pine-needle hillocks.

The fragrance of the early spring-time; the warm breeze playing through the



foliage; the pale green undergrowth, glorious with imprisoned sunlight, which closed the view on every side; the white anemones under his feet, and the rifts of blue sky up above; and, not least, the charming eyes of the girl by his side; all began to make strange havoc in Martin's too susceptible brain.

"Heigho!" he said with a sigh, "I have been very happy here, have not you? And yet it can't last for ever. The day must come when we shall part. Shall you not be sorry to say good-bye?"

"I don't want to stay here for ever," said Miss Adams; but he read in her downcast eyes and blushing cheek a more satisfactory reply.

"I think I may hope you won't quite forget me when that sad time comes?"

"You may hope it," she said gently.

They had reached a stone bench, and he asked her to sit down. She complied with a most encouraging smile.

"I wonder if we shall ever meet again in England?" said Martin tentatively.

"The world is a very small place," she answered. "I am always meeting people again."

"Does that mean you will be glad or sorry to see me?"

"When the meaning of a phrase is dubious, you should always take it in its most complimentary sense," she replied with sweet sententiousness.

The light and shade through the trees played most becomingly on her elegant little person; she had taken off her hat, and with dimpled fingers patted down her curly hair.

Martin felt his blood rush quicker, and for a moment no longer quite knew what he was doing.

"My own little Kate!" he cried, seizing her wrist, and then he knew the Rubicon was passed, and retreat impossible. And, after all, why should he wish to retreat, when she was as loving and pretty and gentle as a girl could be?

"I think you love me a little," he said, drawing her hand nearer to him, "and I love you very much. Will you not make me happy?"

Did he expect she would thereupon fling herself into his arms, and confess herself his for ever? Certain it is that when he found his hand lightly shaken off, and saw Miss Adams rise and retreat a few steps from him, he felt both surprised and disgusted.

"Is that a proposal?" she asked coolly.

"Why, of course it is!" he retorted with warmth. "I am asking you to be my wife!"

She, standing in the road before him, and lightly fingering her coral necklace, looked about her a moment, considering her reply. Then it came with dumbfounding rapidity.

"I think, Mr. Martin, you are the most conceited and insupportable man I have ever met, and I have met a great many, though you seem to think I grew on the top of this mountain, and must be quite overcome at the infinite condescension of Mr. Henry Martin paying me any attention, though I wrote and asked my people about you, and they had never heard of you except in connection with blacking! I never in my life heard anything so funny as your imagining me to be in love with you! It is so comic, it ceases to be impertinent! Have you drawn conclusions from my blushes? I declare half the time I reddened at your folly. I'm doing so now. But, at least, I must thank you for giving me an opportunity of undeceiving you, and showing you your insufferable vanity."

Rage and mortification devoured Martin during the delivery of this audacious speech, and a reply was impossible to him.

Miss Adams, taking breath, continued rapidly:

"I admit I was glad to see you when you first came up. After a month of Jack's and Celesta's society I would welcome anyone, but what I have suffered since from your patronising ways, words will not describe! I could see that you extended your kindness to me, because you considered me a gentle foolish little thing, ready to kiss any hand that caressed me!"

"Well! I shall no longer consider you 'gentle,'" said he moodily, "nor 'foolish' either; you have led me on very cleverly into making a fool of myself."

"I did not lead you on, sir!" she cried, "and if I did I'm delighted; you deserved it. Next time you propose to a girl, take a little more trouble to win her first! Fascinating as you think yourself, you will not find it sufficient merely to throw your handkerchief!"

This was really unendurable, and Martin jumped up with something uncommonly like an oath. At the same moment some heavy rain-drops fell on his angry face.

"What a bore! it's going to rain," remarked Miss Adams serenely. "I shall go back."

It certainly was going to rain with a vengeance. The sky became overcast, and the drops pattered hard and fast on the light foliage overhead. Already the ground was wet; Martin looked round for shelter, and found an old beech-tree, whose twisted trunk and boughs afforded some protection.

Miss Adams after a few steps homeward stopped in dismay. The rain was now falling in torrents, and the scarlet and grey of her gown began to blend in admirable confusion.

She looked at Martin. "What am I to do?" she said in deprecating tones.

"You had better come here," he replied ungraciously, and she went; he gave her his place and stood out in the wet. Though his passion was most effectually cured, he still felt resentful.

The storm swept on and everything was lost in a mist of rain, while, in spite of the shelter, Miss Adams's attire was getting completely ruined, and the poppies in her hat ran down in crimson streaks. This however, was nothing to his plight; his light summer clothing was soaked through in three minutes.

"Do stand nearer me," she said; "there is plenty of room."

But this his dignity would not allow him to do.

"I wish you would stand by me," she repeated presently. "I think you would shelter me a little. The rain is all running down my neck."

Martin did as she desired, but would not vouchsafe her a word. To be crouching under a tree, wet and draggled, in close proximity with an equally wet young woman who has just refused you contumeliously, is to be in a trying position, and Martin felt the absurdity of it keenly. He confounded the weather in his heart, and wished he had never set eyes on the mountain or Miss Adams either.

It was with an exclamation of pleasure that he hailed the first bit of blue sky overhead. The storm cleared off as rapidly as it had broken. With the first gleam of sunshine Martin and Miss Adams emerged from their retreat, looked at each other, and burst out laughing.

The rain had left the beautiful wood more radiant for its visit; a glittering diamond hung on every twig and leaflet; strong fragrant scents, and the song of birds, rose up to heaven; only two human beings stood with limp and dripping

plumes, inexpressibly funny and pitiable objects in the sunshine.

"Please forgive me," said Miss Adams, "I'm afraid I was rude."

"You were very rude," answered Martin promptly, "but I quite deserved it."

"I hope the rain has washed away your wrath," she remarked with a smile.

"Yes, and my folly too. You need not be afraid; I shall not annoy you again. You have most thoroughly cured me."

It was a grim satisfaction to see how Miss Kate pouted at this. He knew it was an objectionable line for a rejected lover to take, and that she probably put it down to his "insufferable conceit," which could not be put out of countenance, but it was better than gratifying her by a spectacle of woeful despair. And in truth he was not particularly woeful; he still thought he had proposed less for his own sake than for hers. As he walked by her side up the sparkling mountain road, he looked again and again at her wet hair and fresh young cheek as though to probe his wound, and he came to the conclusion that his pride was more hurt than his heart.

When they reached the hotel, Mrs. Higgins with her usual perversity waylaid them at the foot of the staircase. She surveyed her cousin's ruined frock with some attention, but she was not moved to laughter. There was nothing that could with certainty be relied on to make her laugh but Higgins's face of misery, when, after an hour's aggravation, she had reduced him to despair.

Now her beautiful mouth was set in ominous lines. "Kate, I have been looking for you everywhere," she said; "I sent Jack out to find you with your umbrella; I never supposed you had hidden yourself away with Mr. Martin. I have changed my plans, and we leave here early to-morrow. Please to have your things ready, and not to delay us as usual at the last."

Miss Adams did not betray the slightest emotion, though this announcement was of course intended to strike her as with a thunderbolt.

"My dear Celesta, what a charming surprise!" she answered gently. "I'll run up and pack at once."

Mrs. Higgins remained facing Martin.

"I am going as much for Kate's sake as my own," said she. "I don't think it good for her to be up here."

"I think she looks remarkably well," he answered.

"Mr. Martin, I will be frank with you," she declared, looking up with those splendid eyes that expressed anything but frankness. "I am much disappointed in Kate. She is not so open as I believed. At one time there were many things said about her which I now begin to see were true."

She conveyed unutterable innuendoes in her voice. He thought she rather overdid it. But he answered with becoming seriousness:

"I too have changed my opinion of Miss Adams since I first came here. She is certainly not so simple as I thought."

Dinner that night was very gay. Martin and Miss Adams talked and laughed a great deal, to prove to each other how lightly they felt the events of the day. Higgins recovered his original cordiality, relieved at the prospect of removing his wife from Martin's dangerous influence; and this lady appeared to the latter equally pleased at punishing him for his devotion to her cousin.

The next day the Higginses left, and Martin made himself useful in stowing away Celesta's five-and-twenty parcels in convenient places in the carriage, and in arranging the various rugs and shawls which she found necessary to her comfort, while Mr. Higgins blew out her air-cushion with an exhaustive energy which threatened to burst him.

Martin asked where they thought of going.

"We sleep at Berne to-night," said Mrs. Higgins. "After that I can tell you nothing. I have formed no plans as yet. It will depend on so many things."

"I hope we may run across you again," said Higgins with some insincerity. "But, you see, my wife's out of sorts; so we shall probably pitch our tent wherever we find a doctor who suits her."

Martin received from Miss Adams a parting smile and blush, and then the carriage drove down through the trees, and he was left in undisputed possession of the hotel, and, indeed, of the whole mountain.

And now he should have begun to feel the torments of disappointed love; he should have refused his food and sought relief in rhyme; but being an ill-conditioned, graceless creature, he ate as heartily as ever and played billiards with a smart German waiter. He did not find the time particularly leaden, nor did he

think of Miss Adams more than fifty times a day.

Once he returned to the scene of his humiliation and smoked a peace pipe on the fatal bench. A small goatherd, driving her frisky black charges up the road, was amazed to see the strange gentleman burst out laughing as she passed. For Martin was reflecting how sold he had been and how well a certain young lady had punished him for his presumption. It was a less amusing reflection that, from an altogether mistaken diagnosis of character, he had, during the space of three weeks, shown himself in the light of a patronising coxcomb to the very girl he imagined he was pleasing.

Some days after he noticed one of the servant-girls hanging out to dry a well-known scarlet skirt she had just washed. This trifling circumstance decided Martin's departure. That gown was fraught with too much meaning for him to bear the sight of it on Anna's comely back. He therefore packed up his traps and bade farewell to Huldensfels and its memories, and betook himself to Neufchatel and thence to Geneva. Then he spent a pleasant time at Vevey, and then went on to Lausanne. Glorious summer weather had set in with its deep blue skies and crimson roses, and in consequence the tourist population swarmed over the land.

About July, Martin got a letter from his Aunt Hilders.

"Pension —, Lucerne.

"MY DEAREST HENRY,—I have just received your address from Eliza, and I write to implore your assistance. I am in a miserable condition. The people here are simply robbing me, and neither I nor Plackers have had anything to eat for a week. However, what I want you for is to recover a box, which has been lost between this and Interlachen. Most fortunately I had all my MSS. with me in a hand-bag. The loss would have been irreparable. But the box contains a bonnet and other valuables, and what with calling for it daily at the station, and keeping an eye on the people here, I am almost out of my senses. I need not tell you how my work suffers in consequence. You will be horrified to hear that I pay eighty francs a week, candles extra, and that they only give one 'plat' of meat at dinner! Plackers behaves admirably, but I can see suffers martyrdom. I sha'n't close an eye till you come.—Your affectionate aunt,

"MAUD HILDERS."

Miss Hilders was a literary lady, who spent six months of the year travelling, accompanied by her maid and her notebook. She was engaged on an interesting work, entitled, *A Woman's Opinions on Europe*; and in the formation of these opinions she underwent much misery and extortion. It is true that half her misfortunes arose from the amazing inertia of her incomparable maid Plackers, who displayed on all occasions a stoical indifference and somnolency, in exact proportion to the fussiness, excitability, and warmth of her good-natured mistress.

Martin was quite willing to go to Lucerne. It was his nature to like to help any woman, and he had long ago accorded to his aunt a portion of that calm condescending affection which he bestowed on his immediate family.

Arrived at Lucerne, he had not much difficulty in recovering the missing box, and that evening he gave Miss Hilders a special little dinner at his hotel; she entertaining him with a detailed account of the misdoings of the lady who kept her pension.

"My dear Henry," she cried, "I am actually obliged to buy tarts, and smuggle them into my bedroom for myself and Plackers to eat during the night. We used to dream of food. But I won't give in till Friday, when my week is up; and then I go straight home. Painful as my experience here has been, it is nevertheless interesting as a study of the typical Swiss pension, to which I shall devote a chapter of my work."

When Martin had conducted this willing martyr back to her prison-house, he sat down outside the *Schweitzerhof* to listen to the band playing the overture to *Zampa*. Crowds of men and women, representatives of every nation, passed restlessly up and down before him, and he began to wonder if he might not suddenly see amongst them Mrs. Higgins's brown ulster, and Miss Adams's gay toilette. It would not be surprising; as she had said, "the world is small," and Lucerne but a very minute and delightful part of it.

"Confoundedly small!" was his mental ejaculation next instant, when he received a hearty smack on the back, and heard a "Hullo! you here, are you?" and he knew, without looking round, that it was Booker, a little man whom he detested and had done his best to affront more than twenty times already. But Booker was irrepressible, and thicker-skinned than the

rhinoceros. Had you kicked him down-stairs he would have only imagined you were dissembling your love, and run up again as radiant; as jocular, as imperturbably odious as ever. Martin was haughty and rather touch-me-not with his sex; he reserved his graciousness for women; it required the obtuseness of a Booker to venture on slapping him on the back. He now threw an icy coldness into his greeting, but felt it was hopeless to awe the fellow, who was buoyant as a cork, and forgiving as a spaniel.

"Well now, I'm astonished to see you," cried Booker, and not being invited to sit down, he stood in front of Martin grinning with a terrible expansiveness. "You are such a man for turning up where you're not expected—I won't say not wanted, you know," and he laughed jocosely, "for I know you'll play fair, and not come in a fellow's way—eh, now?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Martin. "I suppose I've as much right to be in Lucerne as you have; and, I assure you, you are the very last person I looked to meet here."

"Ah! you're a lucky dog to meet me, I can tell you. I know some awfully jolly people, charming girl and all the rest of it, and I'll introduce you if you promise not to cut in between us—eh? A case of 'honour bright,' you know!"

Booker talked so loud, and laughed so hilariously, everybody began to notice him. Martin longed to pitch him into the lake, and got up, perhaps, with that intention.

"Hullo!" cried Booker, pushing his inquisitive head under other peoples' elbows, "there they are! Come on, I'll present you, as the mounseers say. Don't be bashful, man; she won't eat you!"

Martin, who had the advantage of some nine inches in height, had seen, before the conclusion of this speech, Mrs. Higgins and Miss Adams on a bench by the water's edge. A presentiment told him these were the people Booker meant. Nothing should induce him to renew his acquaintance with Miss Adams under such auspices.

With an abrupt "Good-night" he turned away, and Booker sent a parting shaft after him.

"Hullo, Martin! I thought you were so sweet on the ladies; got snubbed—eh?" and then came his customary guffaw.

Martin was very glad to know that Miss Adams was in Lucerne, and at the same time felt that he should meet her with some embarrassment. She was prejudiced



against him, and he had before him the difficult task of removing that prejudice. For he now acknowledged to himself that he loved her, and he wanted an opportunity of proving it to her. Opposition had had the same effect with him as with others. The unattainable became the desirable. In consequence of her scornful refusal, Kate Adams now seemed to him the one woman in the world. He magnified her brightness into beauty; her laughter into wit; and her frills and ribbons indicated a sweet feminine mind. He was determined to win her, but in his newly-found humility the difficulties looked insurmountable. He did not, however, include Booker among them.

The following morning, having ascertained the Higginses' hotel, he went to call on them. He found them in the garden; Miss Adams was not there. Mrs. Higgins received him with her wonted gravity. She was as beautiful and as dirty as before. She wore the old brown ulster over a washing-gown, and a black velvet cap, with gold beetles crawling round it. Higgins looked like a fiery cinder. He explained that he had been up Pilatus the preceding day.

"You are wondering where my cousin is," said Mrs. Higgins. "She went out after breakfast with Mr. Booker. I should not think she would be in till dinner."

"If she is with Booker I venture to say she will be in before that," answered Martin cheerfully.

"She is very glad of his company," said Mrs. Higgins, "she is always going round with him; but then she would do so with anyone."

Mrs. Higgins raised her Madonna eyes with such expressive tenderness, that Martin felt something gallant was expected of him. He was piqued also at Miss Adams's absence.

"I wish you were as kind as your cousin," he said in a bantering tone, (Higgins had fallen back to a respectful distance, and they were walking down to the lake); "I dare not ask you to come in a boat with me?"

Mrs. Higgins, however, agreed with much fervour. She leant on his arm, and gave herself up to his care with a touching confidence. Martin saw she would have pardoned, perhaps welcomed, some slight impertinence.

"I have been very lonely here," she murmured, leaning over the side of the boat, and letting the water slip through

her outspread fingers; while Martin, obtaining a good view of her feet, strongly suspected she had on a pair of Higgins's boots. "I long for a friend to whom I might pour out my soul. After all, there is nothing like friendship. Love is a very poor substitute. One can only truly live in the life of a sympathetic friend, and I have none now."

Martin was no more inclined to fill the vacancy than he had been at Huldensfel, so he rowed awhile in silence along the shore.

"Is Miss Adams too frivolous to confide in?" he asked presently.

"Kate is very heartless," she said in a displeased tone, "though I think she has come to her senses at last. Mr. Booker is a far better match than she had any right to expect. He has an estate in Dorsetshire."

"I knew he came from Bœtia," said Martin inaudibly.

"Kate is determined to marry money," continued her cousin, "and you know she hasn't a penny of her own, and is very extravagant."

Martin saw that his beautiful vis-à-vis still resented his interest in her cousin.

"Celesta!" cried a voice; and there were Kate and Booker watching them from the bank.

Martin at once pulled in to where they stood.

"Oh, do give me a row!" cried Miss Kate. "Quick, quick!" she whispered as he helped her in. "Don't let him come."

The boat was out in a moment, and Booker was left gaping with indignation and astonishment.

"Hullo, you know," he cried, "that isn't fair; I want to come too."

"Run round," cried Martin ironically; "we'll take you up at the bridge."

Little Booker set off in a rage, dodging and knocking against the numerous strollers, and for five minutes Miss Adams could do nothing but laugh, while the boat drifted anywhere, for Martin, from contagion, laughed too, until he was unable to row.

Mrs. Higgins looked on gloomily.

"I shall be glad to go home," she remarked presently. "You will make yourself ill, Kate, after all the honey you ate at breakfast."

Booker was awaiting them at the landing-place.

"Oh, I'm glad you've come off," he said to the ladies, ignoring Martin. "Stupid work in a boat, isn't it? What shall we

do this afternoon—eh? Couldn't we get up some fun, Mrs. Higgins? Have a picnic—eh?"

"Have a picnic, have a dance, have a burial," she answered gravely. "Do exactly what you like. I am going in. Be so good as to stay where you are, Kate."

"Why, what's the matter now?" asked Booker, when she had gone, opening his eyes till they threatened to fall out. "You two ladies have been pulling caps—eh? About me or Martin? Come, tell, now; though why you can't have one apiece I don't see."

Miss Adams sat down on the nearest bench.

"I am nearly dead," she murmured, with her handkerchief pressed against her lips. "Perhaps it's the heat. Mr. Booker, could you—would you go and get me a glass of water, or salts, or anything?"

Booker hesitated. He didn't like leaving Martin in possession. Still, there was Miss Kate lying with closed eyes, and the hotel was close at hand. Then she had clearly shown her preference in asking him, and on his return he would necessarily be first fiddle. He went. Miss Adams looked up at Martin, and they smiled simultaneously.

"Am I very wicked?" she said, getting up and patting her flounces. "But I do hate him so! I assure you, after half an hour of his society, I am ready to faint, though I was not quite so bad just then."

Then with one accord they took the direction Booker was least likely to think of.

"I hope you have had a good time since I saw you last?" Martin asked her.

"I have amused myself ever so much," she said; "but sometimes I think I liked Huldenfels best."

"My recollections of the place are not entirely satisfactory," he continued in a low voice.

"What do you regret?" she said, smiling.

"My stupid behaviour to you," stammering a little over his words.

"Well!" said Miss Kate, laughing, "if you were stupid, you must admit I took no mean advantage of it. Supposing I had taken you at your word, you might now reasonably regret it."

"You misunderstand me," he said eagerly, "I mean if I had appreciated you then as I do now, you might have given me a different answer."

He felt himself positively growing red under the smiling scrutiny of his little

companion; he thought he read in her gay eyes, "You are as conceited as ever."

"Well," she remarked, "if you can only appreciate me at a distance you had better leave me."

They were walking down a grass-grown silent street at the back of the cathedral.

"Let us go in and hear the organ," she proposed.

It was a relief to him to get into the cool dark church, where there were only a few visitors scattered about, listening to the storm, which was raised daily by the organist at the same hour, roll and swell along the aisles and rafters. Martin and Miss Adams sat down together in the shadow of the pulpit steps, and he watched her pass her pretty hands over her curls, and plait up the ribbons on the front of her frock, and twist her seven little rings into wedding bands, and then round again.

He felt he could be happy there with her an indefinite number of hours, and when the storm culminated in some astounding crashes, he regretfully followed her out on to the glaring steps which lead down to the promenade.

There the inevitable Booker pounced upon them.

"Well now, if that isn't too bad," he cried to Miss Adams. "Wherever have you two people been? I've been looking for you everywhere. You're to come up home, Miss Kate, at once. Mrs. Higgins sent me for you. We're all going up the Rigi, take our luncheon with us, and dine up there; come on, there's no time to lose. Mrs. H. will be outrageous."

Miss Adams carefully buttoned up her gloves, which she had withdrawn in church, eight buttons on each arm. Then she answered:

"I am sorry you have had such trouble, for after all, I cannot go."

"Oh, but you must!" cried Booker; "Mrs. Higgins sent me for you."

"No, I am too tired."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Booker; "it will do you good. I'll undertake to amuse you. Do come, now."

"I am too tired," she reiterated sweetly.

"Oh, bother! I'll carry you."

Miss Adams turned upon him with an angry blush, and Martin thought of the little scene under the beech-trees at Huldenfels.

"I will not come, sir!" she exclaimed; "and you may tell my cousin so, and you may ask her the reason!"

Booker retreated in amazement. He was not the least offended, for it never

occurred to him he could be the objection. Nature has bestowed on some of the most hideous of her sons this happy incapacity of believing themselves otherwise than charming.

"Is it not too bad of Celesta," said Miss Adams when he was gone, "to force the man on me like that? She knows how I hate him. The last time we had a picnic she rolled herself up in her ulster, and went to sleep under a tree, and Jack, of course, sat by to keep the flies off. So I was left all day with Mr. Booker, until I became ill with ennui. I vowed I would never go anywhere again if they took him."

"It is not so easy to shake him off," said Martin; "he is a regular old man of the sea. If anyone could be found with public spirit enough to shoot him, that man's fortune would be made. All Booker's acquaintance would subscribe largely to keep him in clover for the rest of his days."

Martin escorted Miss Adams back to her hotel, but did not stay very long with her. She looked so pretty, so gay, so kind, he was on the point of risking his fate again, and he feared it might be premature.

Late in the evening he met Higgins. He enquired after his wife, and hoped she was not tired with her expedition. Mrs. Higgins had acquired a new interest in his eyes, as being "near the rose."

"I am sorry to say Celesta is not at all well," said Higgins slowly. "You see she feels things so much; however, I hope she will be better to-morrow."

"What are you going to do to-morrow?" asked Martin with a view to his own arrangements.

"Well, we're unsettled," said Higgins; "my wife has changed her plans." He hesitated so much that Martin knew something had occurred. "In fact," Higgins continued, "we are going to break up our party."

There was evidently only one way in which this could be done.

"Do you mean that Miss Adams is going to leave you?" said Martin.

"Yes, that's what it is; you see my wife wants perfect rest, and she devotes herself too much to Kate."

Martin pitied Higgins sincerely; he was in an awkward position between the two ladies, and felt it acutely.

The next morning Martin went up to the hotel. He was shown into the Higginses' private room. Mrs. Higgins was lying on

the sofa, in a garment which resembled a dressing-gown. A hair-brush stuck out from between the sofa cushions. She held a tattered French novel in her hand, and closed it over her finger as he entered. A hasty attempt to thrust her stockinged feet back into her slippers, sent one of them flying with a flap on to the polished floor. The room was in amazing disorder. Martin recognised in a heap under the table, where it had evidently just been kicked, the horse-shoe patterned shirt Higgins had worn the previous day. Through an open door was seen the bedroom, in which a still more direful chaos reigned.

Martin asked after Miss Adams.

"She is packing," answered Mrs. Higgins serenely.

"Does she leave you at once, then?" said Martin.

"At twelve to-day," and Mrs. Higgins fixed her dark eyes full upon him.

"And do you mean she is going alone?" said he.

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Higgins, "and she can sleep in Paris to-morrow night, and reach London on Saturday, I suppose."

"Oh, it is quite preposterous," said Martin with warmth; "you cannot send a girl of her age and appearance alone to a Paris hotel. I appeal to you, Higgins?"

Poor Higgins, with a face of burning discomfort, stood running his hands through his fair hair, the picture of misery.

Mrs. Higgins sat up and her holy eyes gleamed dangerously.

"What right have you to interfere in Kate's movements?" she asked insolently.

"None, I am sorry to say; but you must admit it is a very unusual thing to do."

"Kate's conduct is altogether unusual!" cried Mrs. Higgins. "I will not keep her any longer after her disgraceful behaviour yesterday. As for our going with her it is out of the question. Perhaps you would like to accompany her yourself by way of improving things?"

Higgins looked very much distressed.

"My dear ducky!" he remonstrated feebly.

Martin kept his temper.

"I should like to see Miss Adams, if you will allow me," he said.

"This is an hotel," cried Mrs. Higgins; "you can see anyone you like."

With this courteous permission he took his leave. As he closed the door behind him, something came with a violent crack against it from within. Martin believed

it to be the hair-brush; he had certainly seen Mrs. Higgins grasping it with looks of fury. He ran smiling downstairs, and fancied he heard sounds of strife and weeping, and the precursory scream of hysterics, echoing behind him.

He did not ask for Miss Adams at once, but stood awhile at the open door, looking out upon the lake with all its charming reflections. Circumstances were playing into his hands, and he was considering how to turn them to the best advantage.

His eyes straying along the opposite shore, lit on his aunt's little white pension. An idea struck him. He jumped into a passing carriage, and a few minutes later was disclosing to Miss Hilder's sympathising ear, the state of the case and of his affections.

"My dear child," said that excellent woman, "my week is up to-morrow, thank Heaven! and I'll take Miss Adams back to England with me. She had better come here for to-night, though the food is shameful and the cooking worse. I never was so cheated in my life, and Plackers has become as thin as a thread-paper."

"Will you come over now and fetch Miss Adams?" suggested Martin.

Miss Hilders put on her bonnet at once.

"We'll stop and buy plenty of cream-cakes on our way," she remarked; "they are the most supporting, and I know what fine appetites young creatures have. Higgins, do you say the woman's name is? Wasn't she Celesta Kelverton? I know the family well; they are mad, my dear, all of them—as mad as hares!"

"Not the Adams side, I hope," said Martin.

"No; it is on the Kelverton side—the blue-eyed Kelvertons, as we used to call them; and there's not one sane man or woman in the whole family."

About an hour afterwards little Booker, bustling across the long covered bridge, ran up against Miss Adams, walking with that conceited fellow Martin, and an old lady whom he did not know.

"Hullo!" cried the vivacious Booker, "what are you up to now? You aren't so shabby as to have started a picnic without me, I hope?"

Miss Kate laughed and coloured very much.

"You must go and ask Mrs. Higgins," she said, "for she has changed her plans, and this is part of them."

## "OPEN SESAME."

### CHAPTER I. THE MAT DE COCAGNE.

It stood in the centre of a three cornered irregular place, tall and polished, its well-greased sides glittering in the sunshine, and a garland, gay with streamers of coloured paper, hung from its summit, and here dangled the miscellaneous things that were to be the rewards of successful ambition in the way of climbing. All day long—a hot, broiling, cloudless day—the place and its pole had been deserted, for the pleasures of the fête had taken another direction.

There had been regattas, with much firing of cannon on the quay; there had been music; there had been sports. All Canville had had its fill of pleasure, including the most delightful pleasure of all, for which the rest was but the pretext and occasion—the constant ceaseless chatter, the display of all the resources of Canville millinery. Now the shadows were growing long, a cool westerly breeze stirred the leaves of the elms on the public walk and fluttered the flags on the gay Venetian-masts, a soft peaceful rest stole over the landscape, and the satiated world began to think of dinner. Only the last item of the programme remained to be accomplished—the *mât de cocagne*, or greasy pole, to be spoiled of its tempting prizes. And now the deserted place began to fill with people.

It was not a tidy place by any means. The broad white roads that opened into it seemed each to bring its contingent of dust and rubbish. In one corner stood the Hôtel des Victoires, with its gaping gateway, its faded yellow walls, and an air about it which seemed to belie its proud cognisance. Other big houses, with elaborate plaster cornices and festooned with plaster garlands, looked mouldy and neglected, sulkily conscious too of being too big and too florid for their present tenants. The most living animated feature of the place was a cool grot in a corner opposite the hotel, where a little stream came to light for a moment in an open conduit. Over the whole was a slated roof, and here congregated daily the washerwomen of the quarter, with great baskets of linen to be rinsed in the running stream. A descent of a few damp steps led to the level of the water, and here the massive hoary foundation stones of some old bastion showed that the rivulet had once washed the vanished fortifications of the town. Just over the roof were two windows looking



out upon the place, which also formed a pleasant contrast to the general dreariness. It seemed as if the genius of the stream below had climbed thus high to decorate these windows with the freshest greenery. In the hot sunshine this nook was a solace and refreshment; but now with the evening shadows falling, the intense darkness of the interior, with the sight of a white face looking wistfully out from behind the curtain of green leaves, gave a pathetic suggestion to the picture.

The crowd had now thickened, the people of the neighbourhood had brought out their chairs, and were sitting waiting patiently for the beginning of the entertainment. Windows were thrown open, and spectators appeared within as if in their private boxes. On the steps of the hotel stood the host himself in his white kitchen suit, who had snatched this moment for enjoyment between the luncheons accomplished and the dinners yet to come. Even the competitors were there, a pale tatterdemalion set, wet sand oozing out from all the crevices—and they were many—in their garments. Everybody was there excepting only the administration.

From the window over the conduit, the white wistful face has disappeared; in its place a stout dame and a young damsel are surveying the scene. Behind these is a wiry elderly man. It is not often that Madame Desmoulins, the owner of the pale face, and the careful tender of the flowers in the window, entertains her friends. But on such an occasion, with the slippery pole right opposite her windows, she could hardly do less, and then it is a family party. The girl, indeed, is her daughter. The stout lady is Madame Souchet, the postmistress of the town. The other is Lucien Brunet, Madame Desmoulins's brother.

"It is very provoking that they should be so late," cried Madame Souchet, looking at her watch. "No wonder the affairs of the town go wrong when the maire is always unpunctual."

Madame Souchet cast a reproachful glance at Brunet, as if he were in some way responsible for the maire's want of punctuality. And, indeed, M. Brunet in most things was held to be the alter ego of Lalonde, the maire and banker of the place, of whom he was the principal, and, indeed, only permanent clerk.

"Well, here he comes at last, the elephant of a man," cried Madame Souchet, "and now, I suppose, we shall begin."

Brunet craned forward to catch a glimpse of the well-known figure. It would be wrong to say he was proud of his master. But he felt a solidarity, so to say, with the man. Together they might have made something to be proud of. Brunet had a vivid intellect, sensibility, and human kindness, qualities which in Lalonde were entirely wanting. Lalonde, with his obstinacy and firm grip of everything he got hold of, might have counterbalanced a certain weakness observable in Brunet.

"I can't be always at his elbow, madame, to keep him punctual. But, after all, our time is our own; we have not to render an account of every moment to the administration. And this time, I fancy, madame, the gendarmes are in fault."

"Well, here they are at last," cried Marie as the formidable cocked hats and blue and silver uniforms of the gendarmes filed into the place.

"And the quartermaster himself," interrupted Madame Souchet, "and he is looking up at your window, Madame Desmoulins. Bon jour, M. Huron; I wonder if that elegant flourish of the hat was meant for me?"

Madame Souchet delighted to rally her friend upon a certain weakness the gallant gendarme was thought to entertain for her. But Madame Desmoulins never retaliated. She seemed too sad and broken-spirited to contend with the florid, self-satisfied postmistress.

A roar of satisfaction from the crowd gave notice that the fun had commenced. Madame Souchet followed every detail of the contest with great enjoyment.

"The prizes are magnificent this year," she cried. "There is a silver watch, worth at least twenty francs, and of a size! Why, you can see the figures from here. The very thing for a banker. Oh, M. Brunet. Ah, if I were a man! But you have no enterprise."

Marie laughed softly at the notion of her uncle climbing the greasy pole. M. Brunet folded his arms, and looked over their heads in lofty indifference.

"Mon Dieu! there is a new candidate," cried Madame Souchet; "a sailor, I think, for he goes up the pole like a monkey. The wretch! he actually kisses his hands at us. What will M. Huron think? But what a villainous ugly-looking fellow!"

"But I don't find him at all ugly," cried Marie, "and I seem to know the face. Mamma, come quickly and say, is it not somebody we know?"

Madame Desmoulins, thus appealed to, leaned forward and caught sight of a form just on a level with her window. A man had climbed half-way up the pole, and was now resting with his legs firmly clasped about it, waving his hand to the crowd below, who greeted him with derisive shouts. But he was certainly looking hard into these windows, and the sight of Madame Desmoulins's face seemed to be just what he was waiting for, for no sooner had she shown herself than he loosened his hold, slid quickly down the pole, and was swallowed up in the jeering crowd. The woman sank into a chair, her face whiter than ever.

Yes, she had recognised the face, and she felt that with it a new trouble had come into her troubled existence.

As it was, her life was narrow, cold, and joyless. But she had become used to it. She had suffered all kind of bitter things, but had now lost the sense of their bitterness. Yet she shrank from any fresh suffering, and this was what the face she had just seen appeared to announce.

Madame Desmoulins was the wife of an exiled Communist—wife or widow, she knew not which, for the last she had heard of her husband was that he had escaped from Nouméa, the penal settlement, in an open boat with some half-dozen other exiles. Since then she had heard nothing, and it was probable that the whole party had miserably perished in the trackless seas. She had scarcely grieved for him—the bitter stress of poverty and abandonment had so hardened her. Formerly her husband had infected her with his enthusiasm. She had shared his plans, and worked for the same cause. Desmoulins had made no inconsiderable figure in the Commune. For a moment his wife had dreamt of a grand future. Then came the realities of suffering and misery. At one time it seemed likely that she would share his exile. Perhaps such a sentence would have been happier for her than the milder infliction of five years' police supervision in a designated town. Desmoulins owed his escape from a death sentence to the intercession of some people of influence whom he had befriended during his brief tenure of power. By the same influence the town of Canville was assigned as a residence for the wife. She would not have had it so herself; she would rather have chosen some large city where she might have sunk quietly out of existence.

But her husband had thought it best for her; since there, among her own friends, she would at least be preserved from utter destitution. And there, too, was her daughter. From the time of the first disasters of the war, Desmoulins had sent Marie to Madame Souchet, to be safely out of the way, and with her she had remained ever since. The husband and father had judged that his wife would be happy in having her daughter close at hand; but, indeed, to Madame Desmoulins it was a continual torture to see another woman taking her place with her daughter, to feel her own impotence and humiliation. She was too proud to accept any help for herself. With her needle she earned enough to supply her wants and keep a roof over her head, but she would not drag Marie down to her level.

Now at last the woman had learnt to be contented—not with a complacent contentment, but with a hard bitter feeling as of one who owed the world a grudge, but, knowing the world to be the stronger, dissimulated patiently what she felt. And she recognised that the condition of her existence was to eliminate all soft emotions. Marie, indeed, had never ceased to be her mother's daughter, but the mother coldly discouraged all outward signs of affection. If she retained a weakness, it was for her flowers, which she carefully and skilfully tended, making the windows looking out upon the place a very oasis in the desert. And perhaps she had yet another weakness, this self-contained immaculate woman—a weakness on which Madame Souchet had managed to put a finger with her usual skill. She was not quite insensible to the respectful homage of M. Huron, the quartermaster of gendarmes. But then this was a reminiscence, an echo of bygone days.

Twenty years ago, when he had been just twenty years old, and she five years younger, M. Auguste Huron had been madly in love with Mademoiselle Lucille Brunet. She was above him in social position, for her father was an invalided officer, while Huron was the son of a humble forest-keeper. But it was thought that Lucille was not quite indifferent to the manifest adoration of the dark-eyed handsome youth. But Huron was marched off to the army, and saw no more of Lucille, or of Canville, till appointed quartermaster of gendarmes only a few months since. Their relative positions were now reversed—she was a poor sempstress

and he a man in authority, and likely to rise to a higher position. He was still unmarried.

Had he remained single for her sake? It were hard to say.

"Here is the sailor again," cried Marie from the window. "Come and look at him, mamma. I am quite sure we know him."

Marie felt a sudden grip of the arm, and looking round, saw a frowning warning on her mother's face. She saw at once there was a mystery, and was suddenly silent. Madame Souchet was too much engaged in watching the man's progress to notice this by-play, but Uncle Brunet saw it and looked uneasily at his sister.

Yes, Madame Desmoulins knew the face well enough. She had last seen it looking from the door of the prison van that had taken her husband on the first stage of his exile. It was the face of a hot-headed young sailor, a naval lieutenant, a Marseillais, like her husband. He had lived with them during the siege of Paris, and he, too, had been a leading spirit of the Commune.

A roar of mingled applause and disappointment from the crowd announced that the sailor had reached the top of the pole, where he was nonchalantly inspecting the prizes that dangled about him; but all the while he kept a keen eye upon Madame Desmoulins's window, where Marie was waving her handkerchief encouragingly. Then he grasped the watch, put it to his ear, and finding it not going, carefully wound it up, listened again, nodded approvingly, and slid down the pole with the watch in his pocket. There was some commotion below. The regular competitors were furious that a stranger should carry off the best prize. M. Huron was obliged to interfere to keep the peace, but his feelings, too, were enlisted on the side of local talent. He spoke harshly to the sailor, who answered him hotly, and then Huron would have seized him by the collar, but the man, favoured by the crowd, who had taken his part from the moment it was seen he was obnoxious to the authorities, contrived to slip away.

"And now," cried Madame Souchet, "as the excitement is over, I will go back to my work. I shall leave Marie with you for the afternoon, if you don't object, Madame Desmoulins, for I am going to the maire's banquet, and the house will be deserted."

"What! you are really coming to our

banquet!" cried M. Brunet. "We did not expect such an honour."

"Your master is a pig!" cried Madame Souchet, "and you will one day find it out, or rather you will one day acknowledge it; but, though we hate each other, he is still the maire; and I as postmistress have no right to consult my private feelings. You will take care of Marie, then, madame?"

Madame Desmoulins hesitated; her daughter watched her face with a wounded puzzled expression. Here was an opportunity such as rarely occurred to talk about old times, to renew assurances of affection, and the mother hesitated!

"You see," urged Madame Desmoulins, "the child will want to see the fireworks, and I never go to such sights."

"For this once you will," said her brother; "I will come and fetch you both, and find you excellent places."

"That will be charming," cried Marie. "Mamma, you must go; you have so few distractions, and this will do you good."

Madame Souchet sniffed the air suspiciously. The banker's son, a handsome young fellow, clerk to a notary in Paris, was now home for a holiday, and Charles and M. Brunet were like father and son almost. Indeed, it was said that Charles thought more of old Brunet than of his father, who indeed was often harsh and arbitrary. And perhaps Charles, who was known to admire Marie, would join the party. "Very well, he might," concluded Madame Souchet, nodding her head sagely. If M. Brunet had any thought of match-making in his head, all the greater would be his mortification when he found himself forestalled. For the postmistress had herself planned this interview between Marie and her mother, in order that Marie, as a matter of form and to make sure of everything being in order, should ask her mother's consent to a marriage that Madame Souchet had arranged for her. The poor child had promised to ask this consent as a favour from her mother, though, in reality, she looked forward to the marriage with repugnance and dread. She had scarcely seen her intended husband, and there was nothing about him to win her fancy. Now, if it had been Charles! Ah, Charles was everything that was gentle and pleasant.

Madame Souchet, heedless of the agitation that reigned in poor Marie's spirits, hurried home intent upon business. She had just time to look over the letters that

had come in by the afternoon mail, all neatly sorted by her assistant. That was a duty she never failed to perform. She had too much interest in the affairs of her neighbours to neglect this avenue of information. Long practice had taught her to judge pretty accurately of the contents of letters from their outside appearance. She knew who was pestered by creditors from a distance, who was blessed with a spend-thrift son always appealing for money; who had unsuspected savings carefully invested in distant securities; what gallant husband corresponded with unknown dames; what neglected wives had loving friends to console them. Indeed, so penetrated was she with the character of her neighbours' correspondence, that anything unusual or abnormal struck her with something like the awe that Robinson felt at sight of the footprint in the sand. To-day she had just such a turn. There was a massive irregular scrawl, addressed to Madame Desmoulins, who never had a letter since those officially stamped despatches from Nouméa had ceased to be sent. And the handwriting was not unfamiliar, it excited reminiscences. Madame Souchet ran hastily to her desk, and brought out some old papers, one of them bearing the ugly prison stamp; a letter from Desmoulins begging her to be good to "la petite." The handwriting was the same. Madame Souchet sank into a chair quite aghast.

And there was the postman waiting for his bag, his time-bill in his hand, and she had to decide all in a moment what to do! No, she could not let the letter go. She threw it on one side and made up the bag. The postman went his way and still she sat there with the letter in her hand, undecided what to do.

The indecision did not last very long. Madame Souchet was too perfect a postmistress to find any difficulty in the envelope, even though carefully gummed and sealed with surest wax. The enclosure was soon at her disposal. Alas! the contents were but vague. Imprudent as M. Desmoulins had been in writing with his own hand a letter that must pass through the post-office of Canville, he was not quite so imprudent as to commit anything vitally important to its keeping. There was no date, no address. Simply the words: "Dearest, I am free; be ready to join me, you and Marie—more by surer hands."

The face of Madame Souchet assumed

an evil expression. By surer hands, indeed! There was a secret reflection upon herself in that phrase, as if the man had foreseen she would read it and had planned a covert blow. She who had been his daughter's benefactor; she whom he had implored, writing there on his knees as he told her, to be good to la petite! And she had been good to her. And then how the child had grown into her heart, making her life, dry and withered before, blossom like Aaron's rod. And then, march! de-camp! leave the old woman to her fate; leave her to gnaw her heart out with mortified love. For Marie would go—not a doubt of it—would leave her with hardly a tear, hardly a sigh. But, no! swore Madame Souchet softly to herself, things should not march quite like that either.

Just at this moment the trap-door of the office-wicket was gently raised. Madame Souchet, in her agitation, had forgotten to fasten it when she had given out the bag to the postman, and a purple mottled face with a red bulbous nose, shaded by the peak of a blue and silver képi—the most faded blue, the most tarnished silver—appeared in the opening. The head advanced, the neck craned forward; almost it peered over Madame Souchet's shoulder, when the postmistress, startled by some unaccustomed sound, or was it perhaps the spirituous atmosphere that surrounded the Père Duze, turned fiercely upon the intruder.

"Pardon," cried the père humbly, and began to excuse himself. The pressing nature of his errand had made him forgetful of politeness. Had Madame Souchet forgotten the hour? The maire expected his guests at seven precisely, and here it was a quarter past.

"I am coming," said Madame Souchet gruffly. Then could the père carry anything for her—her bonnet-box, her sabots? "No, no!" cried the postmistress, slamming the window in his face.

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